

What is claimed is:

1. A method of transferring data relating to a user from a first data processing device to a second data processing device over a communications network, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) said first device receiving over said network from said second device a request for said data, said request including an identification of one or more pre-defined data elements for which the request is made;
- b) said first device accessing a file containing data relating to the user, said file including data elements identified by data element identifiers and retrieving from said file one or more of said data elements identified in said request; and
- c) said first device forwarding to said second device said retrieved data elements.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein one or both of said devices are computers.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein said file is stored on said first device.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein said request is in the form of a web page having one or more fields for receiving data elements, and wherein said identification of one or more pre-defined data elements is in the form of a machine-readable tag accompanying said one or more fields.

5. A method according to claim 4, wherein said first device retrieves from said data file those data elements having identifiers which correspond to the tags in the request.

6. A method according to claim 5, wherein a browser engine operating on said first device adds said retrieved data elements to said web page and presents the web page including the added data elements to a user before forwarding said data elements to said second device.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein said browser engine provides the user with the option to confirm the submission of said data elements before forwarding said data elements to said second device.

8. A method according to claim 6, wherein said browser engine provides the user with the option to vary said data elements before forwarding said data elements to said second device.

9. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of said first device logging the submission of said data elements to said second device.

10. A method according to claim 1, wherein said first device is a server which stores said data on behalf of said user.

11. A method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of verifying with said user that the data should be forwarded to said second device.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein said user is connected to said network by a device which is physically remote from said first device.

13. A method according to claim 12, wherein said user is connected to said network by a third data processing device.

14. A method according to claim 13, wherein said user uses said third device to access a web page hosted by said second device, and wherein the user directs said second device to forward said data request to said first device in order to supply information requested on said web page.

5 15. A method according to claim 14, wherein said user provides said second device with the network address of said first device.

16. A method according to claim 12, wherein said first device generates a verification request to said user in response to the data request being received from said second device.

10 17. A method according to claim 16, wherein said user is connected to said network by a third data processing device.

18. A method according to claim 17, wherein said verification request is passed from said first device to said third device via the second device.

15 19. A method according to claim 16, wherein said user is based at said second device and wherein the verification is accomplished by means of an interaction between said user and said second device.

20. A method according to claim 19, wherein said user interacts with said second device at least partially by means of an ID device held by the user and an ID device reader connected to said second device.

20 21. A method according to claim 20, wherein said ID device is selected from a magnetically readable data carrier, an optically readable data carrier, a carrier containing an integrated circuit on which an identification is stored, a device

operable to transmit electromagnetic signals to an ID device reader, and a mechanically readable data carrier.

22. A method according to claim 20, wherein said ID device carries a network address of said first device in machine readable format.

5 23. A method according to claim 20, wherein said ID device carries a network address of said first device in human readable format.

24. A method according to claim 20, wherein said ID carrier contains information effective to identify the user to the first machine.

10 25. A computer program product in machine readable form containing instructions which when executed cause a computing device to transfer data relating to a user over a communications network by:

- a) receiving over said network a request for said data, said request including an identification of one or more pre-defined data elements for which the request is made;
- 15 b) accessing a file containing data relating to the user, said file including data elements identified by data element identifiers and retrieving from said file one or more of said data elements identified in said request; and
- c) forwarding over said data network to another computing device
20 said retrieved data elements.

26. A computer program product according to claim 25, further comprising instructions to implement a web browser.

27. A computer program product according to claim 26, wherein said request is in the form of a web page having data entry fields and wherein said browser identifies the data elements required for said fields from tags included in the web page.

5 28. A computer program product according to claim 27, wherein said browser is effective to fill the retrieved data into the corresponding data fields in the web page and to present said web page including said data to said user.

10 29. A computer program product according to claim 25, wherein said instructions are further effective to cause the computing device to identify said user from a plurality of users and to effect an authentication procedure requiring input from said user before forwarding said data elements.

30. A computer program product in machine readable form containing instructions which when executed cause a computing device ("the second device") to:

- 15 a) receive from a remote computing device ("the third device") an instruction identifying the network address of a further remote computing device ("the first device");
- b) issue a request for data to said first device, wherein said request includes an identification of one or more pre-defined data elements for which the request is made; and
- 20 c) receive from said first device one or more of said identified data items.

31. A computer program product according to claim 30, further effective to cause said second device to forward said data items received from said first device to said third device, and await confirmation that said data items are valid.

5 32. A computer program product in machine readable form containing instructions which when executed cause a computing device to:

- a) receive as an input a network address of a remote computing device;
- b) forward to said network address a request for data relating to an identified user;
- c) receive from said remote computing device data relating to the user; and
- d) utilise said data in a transaction with the user.

10 33. A computer program product according to claim 32, wherein said network address is input by means of a reading device reading said address from an ID device held by said user.

15 34. A computer program product according to claim 32, wherein said computing device is selected from a hotel check-in terminal, an airline check-in terminal, and a call centre to which the user has a telephony connection.

20 35. A method of obtaining data from a user of a web site, the method comprising providing a web page which includes a request for data relating to the user, wherein said request includes a machine readable identification

of one or more data items required to complete the transaction, and receiving from the user one or more of the data items thus identified, whereby a data processing device associated with the user can provide the requested data items from a stored file containing data relating to the user organised by data item identifiers.

36. An information transfer system comprising:

- a) a communications network;
- b) first and second data processing devices connected to said network;
- c) a storage unit associated with the first device and containing a plurality of data items relating to a user, in which said data items are organised by data item identifiers;
- d) computer program means associated with the first device which when executed cause the first device to
 - i) determine from a request received from said second device an identification of one or more data items for which the request has been made;
 - ii) retrieve available data items from said storage unit and
 - iii) transmit said data items to said second unit.

37. An information transfer system according to claim 36, further comprising a third data processing device connecting said user to said network, and computer program means associated with said second device which when executed causes said second device to:-

- a) receive an instruction from said third device identifying the network address of the first device, and
- b) transmit said request to said first device upon receipt of said instruction.

5 38. An information transfer system according to claim 37, wherein said computer program means associated with said second device further causes said second device to forward said data items received from said first device to said third device, whereby said user may issue from said third device to said second device a confirmation signal that the data items
10 are correct.

39. A web site including a web page containing a request for data relating to a user of the web site, wherein said web page includes a machine readable identification of one or more pre-defined data items included in said request.

15 40. A web site hosted by a web server on a data network, said web site including a web page containing a request for data relating to a user of the web site, wherein said web page includes an option selectable by a user to cause the web server hosting the page to direct a request for data to a remote computer identifiable by said user.

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